

The Ryerson Canadian History Readers

LORNE PIERCE, Editor

Endorsed by
IMPERIAL ORDER DAUGHTERS OF THE EMPIRE AND THE
PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

JOHN TANNER

**Captive Boy Wanderer of the
Border Lands**

By

A. C. LAUT

Author of "Pathfinders of the West"

PRICE, 10 CENTS

THE RYERSON PRESS
TORONTO

The Ryerson Canadian History Readers

Lorne Platte, Editor

"Pupils who depend upon the authorized text alone for their information learn little or nothing about Champlain's life except the days he spent in Canada. They know nothing about his fighting days with Henry of Navarre; that he travelled widely in Spanish America; that he wrote interesting books about his travels; that he was the first man to suggest the possibility of a Panama Canal. All this and a very interesting account of all he did for his beloved colony, his toilsome wanderings through the primeval forest, his zeal in spreading a knowledge of Christianity among the cruel and ignorant savages, will be found in this very interesting little booklet on an early Canadian hero—Champlain."—*Manitoba Teacher*.

What is true of *Sagadahoc de Champlain*, by Adrian MacDonald, in the **RYERSON CANADIAN HISTORY READERS** is equally true of the other gallant figures which form the theme of this series of short biographies of the great heroes of Canadian history. Against the background of Canada in the making stand out the romantic personalities of her makers—explorers, warriors, missionaries, colonists.

"A large number of these popular little books have made their appearance. They make absorbing reading for any one wishing to get a brief insight into the romantic life surrounding the important personalities in Canadian history."—*Toronto Globe*.

Printed on excellent paper, with clear type, from 16 to 32 pages, illustrated by C. W. Jefferys, R.C.A., an artist into whose exquisite little line drawings has gone a whole lifetime of historical research, vivid in style, brief enough to be read at a short sitting, these little booklets deserve the intelligent recognition of every teacher, librarian, and student in Canada. Not only do the **RYERSON CANADIAN HISTORY READERS** provide the first complete history of Canada from East to West, based on the romance of personality, but they provide also the first complete pictorial history of the Dominion.

Those marked with an asterisk are already published and available.

1. STORIES OF PATHFINDERS

- *Pathfinders to Anasim—S. P. Chester
- *Jacques Cartier—J. C. Sutherland
- *Henry Hudson—Lawrence J. Burpee
- *La Salle—Margaret Lovell
- *Daniel de Laul—Dorothy Davies
- *Père Marquette—Agnes Leal
- *Pierre Radisson—Lawrence J. Burpee
- *Alexander Henry and Peter Pond—Lawrence J. Burpee
- *John Jewett—Eleanor Hammond Broadie
- *Cadillac—Agnes C. Leal

2. STORIES OF PATHFINDERS

- *La Vérandrye—G. J. Ross
- *Anthony Henday and Matthew Cocking—Burpee
- *Captain Cook—Mabel Burkholder
- *Samuel Hearne—Lloyd Roberts
- *Captain George Vancouver—P. W. Hensley
- *Sir Alexander Mackenzie—Adrian MacDonald

- John Tanner—Agnes C. Leal
- *David Thompson—A. S. Martin
- *Sir John Franklin—Marian H. Leal
- *Sir John Franklin—V. L. Denison

3. STORIES OF SETTLEMENT

- *Samuel de Champlain—Adrian MacDonald
- *Hilbert: The First Canadian Farmer—John Jarvis
- *Frontenac—Helen E. Williams
- *Talbot—Helen E. Williams
- *Old Fort Prince of Wales—M. H. F. Alexander
- *Colonel Thomas Talbot—Fred Landon
- *The Assiniboine—P. F. Sedy
- *Lord Selkirk—William Harris
- *The United Empire Loyalists—W. E. Wallace
- *The Canada Company—J. B. Macdonald
- *Prairie Place Names—Helen Harris

(This List continued on inside back cover)

*Canadian
History Readers*

(Tanner, John)

JOHN TANNER

HOW did the North American map look about 1783-1787? Such changes had occurred that the old maps no longer showed who owned what, nor what its new name was. When French Quebec fell to British victory on the Plains of Abraham, everything north of what we now call the boundary became British North America. New flags were now floating over the forts north and south of the boundary.

The confusion of all these swift changes on the Indian mind can be guessed.

And the Indians were now well supplied with fire arms. The fighting forces, French and British now up in Canada, British and American in the United States, had each traded to the tribes firearms aplenty. It had not been good for the Indian to see white brother fighting white brother. He lost his respect for the whites.

Still more confused was the Indian mind by the changes in the fur trade. The adventurers of the Hudson's Bay Company now had their men working up the Nelson and the Saskatchewan, as far as the Rockies.

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

Just keep that picture in mind as a background. Across the picture will presently move one of the saddest figures in all frontier life—a little boy captive.

I cannot give you any exact dates. The boy was captured too young to remember his own age. You recall how the Jesuits went west "for the greater glory of God." So did many a Protestant missionary from New England and the South, without a cent of support from any one but what his own right arm could wrest from the soil by week-day work. Among these was one John Tanner, of West Virginia. When the Shawnees began moving West, he determined to follow the wanderers down the Ohio and establish a new home, either on the Ohio or Kentucky side of the Beautiful River.

To move his family and slaves, he bought a sort of keel boat-raft. The deck had what was like a log cabin for shelter, and it was pock-marked and blood-spattered from some fight on the river. In this he placed his family and furniture. Another boat, with railing, had horses and cattle, and a third, farm implements, axes, plows, scythes. To each was attached the usual tree upside down as rudder, to steady the craft in the bounce

JOHN TANNER



TANNER LEADING THE MARCH ON FORT DOUGLAS

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

of spring flood; and away the boats floated on their long journey to the unknown.

Just opposite the muddy flats of a frontier village called Cincinnati, the barge with the cattle had a bad spill. As it glided ashore, there was a rush of the stock to land. The railing broke and the cattle slipped into the water. Settlers ashore dashed down and succeeded in driving the cattle up on the South Bank. Father Tanner had not one coin to pay them for their help.

Father Tanner probably thought the south shore would be safer than the north. Besides, some distance from Cincinnati, he found a squatter's claim abandoned owing to an Indian raid. It was a cluster of cabins for house and stable, protected by a high-picketed stockade like a little fort, with lovely open park land—easy fields for the plow, and trees for shade and timber. Thither Father Tanner hurried his family, having everything ship-shape in a few days for farm work and to get in a crop. There were other settlers; for there was a little school, which the children could attend.

One day when Father Tanner and an elder brother were broadcasting in the crop, with the slaves busy plowing and harrowing, little

JOHN TANNER

John was forbidden to leave the stockaded yard. To keep him busy, his mother gave him the baby to carry up and down the room. Now, John was simply Indian crazy. He wanted to see Indians, to live like Indians, to play Indians all day long. So he gave the baby a pinch. The baby roared. He gave it another pinch. The baby howled louder than ever. The mother took it, and John scampered. He dared not go out by the front gate; so he ran round to the back, climbed the logs monkey-fashion and jumped down behind. Not far stood a big walnut tree. He scuttled to hide on its far side. On the ground lay nuts. He began gathering them in his cap. If it had not been near mid-day, a shadow might have warned him; but as he gathered the nuts, a long pair of snaky copper arms reached round and grabbed him.

When he revived, he was in a dug-out, which a young buck and an older Indian were paddling across the Ohio North. When he sat up, the two Indians were drawing ashore on the right bank of the Miami, where they had some venison and bear meat concealed in the usual cache. They roughly tossed him some raw meat. He could not eat it. There was a lump in his throat. A

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

whistle like the call of birds at night summoned other Indians from hiding. The little lad knew his father and brother must now be hunting for him; but as night fell, his hopes of rescue sank; for the Indians again began paddling—this time up stream, up the Miami; and he saw the last red chimney sparks fade in the distance to the south.

It was a tragedy of fate, but one night in camp near Toledo or Detroit, he heard a party of searchers shouting his name; but a move on his part, and the Indians would have strangled him. Poor little Tanner now nightly sobbed himself to sleep.

If you look at a map you will see that the Indians could save a rough passage round a long bulge on the west shore of Lake Huron, by cutting across country on horse back to Saginaw Bay. The boy was roped to a little pony and the baggage heaped on other horses. On Saginaw Bay was the main camp of the Shawnee band. Tanner had learned his master's name was Manitou-Geezkick; his Indian brother's, Kish-kau-ko. Manitou's squaw rushed out and took him in her arms to replace a son lost in the raids. Owing to the colour of Tanner's eyes, he was dubbed the Grey Hawk. The object of such

JOHN TANNER

kidnapping of white children was to replace young warriors killed, sell as slaves, extort ransom money.

Tanner fared very badly indeed, with his adopted family. As he learned long afterward, Manitou was infamous for frontier murders. He was a drunken, besotted brute.

Hoping against hope, the boy used to wonder what had become of the rescue party he heard shouting his name that night he lay concealed beneath the dirty blanket. Back from a raid on the Ohio, the next spring when Tanner had been a little slave for a year, Kick-kau-ko tossed a cap to the boy that John recognized as his brother's. "There—we have slain all your family," boasted the Indian.

The rivalries among all the fur traders had now become so keen that the English of the Soo had called a rally of Indian hunters to try to lure them from the Americans centred at Mackinac. The Soo Straits led through to Lake Superior; Mackinac south to Huron and Michigan. Cunning to play one trader against the other for higher prices, Indians came from far and near to the Straits of the Upper Lakes.

Manitou must have wanted whisky pretty

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

badly; for he now traded Tanner for ten gallons of whisky, some blankets and tobacco, to one of the most extraordinary squaws ever known on the Great Lakes. Her name was Net-no-kwa, but she was universally called Old Woman. In fact, some of the portages in the North seem to have been named after her. She was neither an Indian chieftain nor medicine woman, but she had more power than either. Her mind was cunning as a corkscrew. She never lost her temper. She took great and tender care of her ragamuffin band, and was always adopting some Indian waif, whom she treated as son, not slave. She had a youthful husband, and his family, too, tagged on to her camp following. She seemed to have relatives in every tribe. She was a terrible drunkard, but even in her drunken moods, when not soddenly unconscious she never forgot which of her family of youthful hunters might be out in storms and went to their rescue. She was brave as a lioness, and, in spite of her notorious habit of lying torpid from liquor for days near the fur posts, she was respected and obeyed by the white traders. She had implicit faith in prayers to

JOHN TANNER

the Great Spirit, and believed He always answered her in dreams.

Little Tanner's life as slave now became life as son. It was not till much older that he realized Old Woman simply adopted waifs to have a band of hunters for her own camp, and that the traders gave her unlimited supplies of liquor to attract furs from all the tribes she knew.

The Border lands of Minnesota and Manitoba were dangerous ground in this era. To be sure, they had good hunting always—rabbit, duck, moose, deer, bear, beaver, fish of the best; but they had heavy slush snows in spring and fall, bitterly cold winters, and summers in which the Sioux of Eastern Minnesota were always on raid or counter-raid against the Saulteau or Indians of the "leaping waters" at the Straits. Tanner was given traps and taught how to use them—but Tanner had not yet been given a gun.

Old Woman's lazy young husband had a beautiful new bird-gun. Tanner teased the good-natured fellow for the loan of that gun.

"Loan it to him," argued Old Woman. "Time for son to become a hunter."

"Go," laughed the husband. "If you kill any game, I give you gun."

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

Tanner was about eleven years old. All he recollected about his brother's and father's hunting was, you loaded the muzzle with a ramrod, got the punk and rosin under the trigger, raised the trigger and let blaze. He forgot that you have to hold the gun close to your shoulder or get a thump in a back-kick; but he was determined to get that gun by coming back with game; so he didn't attempt to shoot anything on the wing. He picked a pigeon perched on a tree, stole up close to it, and, not to miss aim, held the gun in line with his nose. Bang went the gun. Down fell the pigeon. Back kicked the butt. Home ran Tanner triumphant to claim the gun, unconscious his nose was purple and magenta; but he got the promised gun for his very own and was taught how to use it.

Now he was becoming useful to Old Woman. She clothed him well. She kept his buckskin free of vermin. She fed him so that he grew tall, though gaunt as a greyhound. He used to rise long before dawn, set a circle of traps and snares, then that night or next day run round the circle to secure the game before wolves could devour it. He learned that in winter storm was more dangerous than raiding Sioux. A peevish

JOHN TANNER

scolding whine to the wind, a wet circle round the moon, "sun dogs," "mock suns"—Tanner knew all these signs of coming storm to burst in a hurricane of wind and snow; and he would dash for home as fast as his snowshoes would carry him.

One winter smallpox and measles were running rampant among all the lake tribes. Old Woman wisely withdrew her camp followers deep in the forests of the Marsh Lands, distant from all contagion; but it was a terribly cold winter. Game had "holed" up under the snow for the winter; and food became scarcer and scarcer in camp. One night when Tanner and an older boy had slept under a lean-to of cedar brush, feet to fire, they wakened to find the cedars in a flame. Reefing their belts in on empty stomachs, they poked their feet in snowshoe thongs and began the weary tramp home. They came to a stream so rapid it had not frozen deeply and were sliding across the ice, when with a crack, down in the cold water floundered both boys. Feet freezing in the wet moccasins, stiff and chilled from head to heel, famished, trembling, they had hardly strength to get a rotten cedar going in a log fire so that they could

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

dry themselves and not freeze to death. The Indian boy wanted to sit right down and die. Tanner had sense enough to poke him up and keep him moving. They resolved to stay by the fire for the night. When dawn came they set out through the frost mist to back-track home. Out of the aisled forest, like a grotesque ghost in rags, rolled in sailor gait the portly figure of Old Woman, with fresh clothing and food for both her boys; "infants," she called them. It took till sundown to reach camp. She must have tramped all night. How did she know where to find her lost, starving boys?

By spring the raids between Sioux and Cree had become so dangerous, Old Woman decided to move from the Marsh Lands round to the north shore of Lake Superior where they could go west to the plains by the old Nor'-Westers' route, Fort William, Fort Francis, Kenora, Lake of the Woods, Fort Alexander, Lake Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Assiniboine River, Portage la Prairie, then south to the Mandan Land of the Missouri. Of course, these points were not known by modern names at that time. Fort William was Grand Portage; Kenora was Rat Portage; Lake of the Woods as Lake of the

JOHN TANNER

Castors, or Crees or Assiniboines. Winnipeg was the Forks of the Assiniboine and Red. All this was wonderful hunting ground, where the laziest camp need not starve unless they let everything go for traders' rum.

There are two bad traverses across Lake Winnipeg, as all campers there now know. One is from Fort Alexander on the south-east corner, south-west to Red River. The other is at the Narrows, or the wasp waist of the Lake farther north.

The traders at Fort Alexander had warned the youngsters to beware of twisting winds running across to the swampy flats of Red River. The Old Woman had, as usual, become sodden drunk at the fort; and lay a dead weight of ballast in the bottom of a canoe. The waves began to mount and lash, the canoe to sidle and take water. The boys howled in an anguish of terror. Up rose the old bundle of rags like a wraith of the storm. Out flipped her paddle heading the canoe to mount the waves.

"Pull, my infants! Pull for your lives," she screamed, "or we are lost. Though we can't see the rocks, we can pass between them." Through the boiling waters between rocks barely a canoe length apart, the

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

frail birch craft rode, landing with a plunk in the sand soft as flour. They rested here to get a breath or two, also to recover their lost nerve and perhaps pick the berries, always in abundance. Then up the swampy entrance of Red River, where thousands of campers play each summer holiday to-day, past the Upper and Lower Rapids, which Tanner hardly ever mentions. They were too insignificant compared to the deep wild waters of the Lakes.

Crees of the plains, Assiniboines, Ojibways, Ottawas, camped under buckskin tepees where stands the Canadian National Railway station to-day. Tanner had seen the tepee type among the Woody Cree of the lakes, but the other lake tribes he knew used wigwams, circular-roofed, bark-covered, fur-lined camps. Half-breed buffalo hunters at this time numbered two thousand. Assiniboine and Cree buffalo hunters were as numerous. Firearms were in general use, with balls made from traders' lead tea chests. The cap was of punk wood; but many hunters still used the huge bow and arrow. The bow had been strengthened with snake skin bound round the wood wet, then dried hard as iron. The quiver full of arrows was

JOHN TANNER

strapped to the shoulders, and the best hunter was he, who, riding at wild pace abreast the buffalo herd, could shoot at the heart or flank too quick for a gouge of the sharp horns in his own pony's flank.

Picture the scene from earliest dawn. Scouts were out to south and west to spot the coming buffalo herds.—Hunters were training ponies on the flats. Camp-fires were atwinkle against the western sky. Young Indian gallants in all their finery paraded before the tepees where bebies of young squaws also paraded in their finely decorated buckskin and doe white leathers. Daylight lingers long in the North. The castanets and the tom-toms lured old and young to the circular dance, when in one round the young buck would lead his lady out in the dance, then in the next the young squaw would pick the partner.

Old Woman, as usual, was welcomed by all the hunters, and given provisions to carry her party on west, up to the Assiniboine to Portage la Prairie. Here the main buffalo herd had been located.

Not caring to risk her adopted sons in the mad stampede of a big buffalo hunt, Old Woman withdrew from the main big camp of

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

runners and set her "infants" trapping small game. All that summer and winter Tanner had great luck with his beaver, but there were fur posts at Portage la Prairie, also at Souris; and all pelts seem to have gone for rum. The main body of hunters had moved south across the Border, following the herd receding towards the Missouri; and as winter fell, Old Woman's camp became acutely short of food. The boys had to scamper and scamper hard from sun-up to sun-down to keep supplied with rabbit and fish and bird game.

One night, somewhere near Portage la Prairie, Tanner heard the Old Woman offering wild chants to the Great Spirit. At dawn, as the boys were lacing on moccasins, she strode into their tent. "Last night, there appeared to me the form of a man in my dream. He promised me a bear to-day. He told me where to find it." She told the boys—a prairie in the midst of brush, snow in a circlet, under the hump of snow, a bear.

The older boy laughed outright. He was tired of her and her rum. As the camp began to move for the day, Tanner changed his traps for a gun and turned back. A squaw in the band laughed harshly. "Was little white going to kill big Injun?"

JOHN TANNER

Tanner came to a spring. A game runway seemed to track the snow back up to a little hillock. There was mist or snow in a slight wisp above that hillock. It struck Tanner that might be a concealed bear's breathing hole. A black head poked up a sharp snout. Tanner was so taken aback at close range, he shot in fear and by sheer luck his ball struck straight between the eyes. Tanner had killed his first big bear, when he, himself, was too small to drag its body out.

When he reached Old Woman's tepee, her eyes bored into his. "Go in, son! In the pot is a little beaver meat." He squatted down and ate ravenously. He didn't burst into boasting. It was Old Woman who was bursting with curiosity. She leaned over, peering into his face.

"I killed a bear," remarked the boy casually as though he had smacked a mosquito.

"What—do—you—say?"

"Killed a bear."

"Are you sure he is dead?"

"Oh, yes, he's dead."

The next moment it was Tanner who was almost dead. She had seized him with such

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

a rapturous hug it almost cracked his thin ribs. Of course, a bear feast followed.

Birch bark canoes were built to descend the Assiniboine. Because the Sioux were on the ramp against Cree and Assiniboine that spring, Old Woman directed her canoes to round out into Red River from the Assiniboine at night. The whistle of a startled bird came from brambles to the north. Another whistle came from the south. "Mid-stream—under the mists," whispered Old Woman, and all heads ducked from possible shots. Up flopped from the fog a poor old goose trying to rouse her lazy family of nestlings to day duties. Tanner was so disgusted at himself, he let fly a bird harpoon; but the old mother goose sailed away honking.

It was near Portage la Prairie, lucky at his first shot, that young Tanner brought down his first buffalo. The herd was evidently expected on its northward migration in spring. The boys had not been permitted to join the main bands of hunters. They were deemed too young. Old Woman rushed into the tent one morning with word that the whole herd was stampeding at a gallop, with the rumble of thunder, straight for their tepees! They must up, and divert

JOHN TANNER

the herd; to split by gun shot and yells, or their camp would be stampeded to earth. The herd split blindly, going at a thundering gallop past, when Tanner aimed and fired. He dropped his first big buffalo.

Not far from what to-day is Rapid City, Tanner had an experience he could never explain.

There was an old camp near Rapid City known as Two Dead Men. Two brothers, with the hawk for totem, or clan sign, had once camped and quarreled and fought there. One stabbed the other to death. The Indians were so outraged by the ferocity of the quarrel in the same family, that they at once slew the murderer and buried both in the same grave. The old camp became famous as haunted. Indians shunned it. It gave them bad dreams, they said. Now Tanner's Indian name was Grey Hawk. Perhaps out of defiance to the medicine men, or from that curiosity which had led him into so much dire disaster from boyhood, he deliberately drew his canoe ashore, lighted his lonely night fire, put up his tepee and went to bed in a blanket. Was it nightmare from aching bones or too heavy supper? He could never tell; but he seemed to see two

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

Indians come and sit down in perfect silence beside his camp fire. He seemed to get up and sit down beside them. They vanished. He got up and looked out. The night was dark. The wind was lonely and peevish. He lay down and again was in deep, heavy sleep. This time he was awakened by switches lightly tapping his face. (The wind in the branches might have suggested that to his dreams.) But there sat the two Indians again. One pointed out through the tent door in the dark. There stood a horse he had lost. (The neigh of the horse for his master might have suggested that.) Anyway, Tanner would never again camp near Two Dead Men.

All along this borderland of Manitoba—Saskatchewan, Minnesota and Dakota—Tanner was daily meeting white men who spoke English—Nor'-West fur traders, Hudson's Bay men, American traders. There was Alexander Henry, down at Pembina. There was Dr. McLoughlin, on Rainy River. There was Tom McKay, of Sir Alexander Mackenzie's voyages, and later a victim on Astor's *Tonquin*. There were the Selkirk Settlers, whom he didn't like. They regarded him as a wild man. He regarded

JOHN TANNER

them as boors; but he was beginning to speak English once more, and Old Woman was quick as a cat watching a mouse escape from her claws to sense a change in her hunter-son. She was a cunning old witch, and didn't scare her prize mouse by a quick pounce. She began whining, wheedling, coaxing, arguing. She was "growing old." She could not see to "sew his moccasins." He should have "a young Indian wife to keep his tepee fire burning and prepare his furs." Let him marry some good Cree chief's daughter, and he would have the protection of all the prairie Crees.

Though now about twenty, Tanner was cold to these persuasions; but he was equally cold to the fur traders' arguments that he must quit Indian life. What could he do, if he did quit? He was no counting house man. He would not barter rum for furs. He had no white family—or thought he had not—to whom he could go back on the Ohio. What could he do but hunt? All the same, Old Woman's arguments reacted in a fashion. He was deadly sick of her drunks, consuming all the proceeds from his hunting. He was becoming slightly deaf from constant exposure and those awful beatings

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

among the Shawnees. He needed care and he was not getting it; so when a fine Muscogee chief suggested his clean little daughter—Red Dawn—as wife for Tanner, John somehow began preening his long hair, dressing better, playing the love flute softly on a willow whistle in front of Red Dawn's tepee.

One night, Old Woman gave him a push inside his tepee. There sat Red Dawn at his fire preparing supper. According to Indian custom, they were man and wife; and she was a good little industrious, clean wife too. The trouble was her Indian mother was pure Cree, a devil worshipper dominated by the medicine men, whom Tanner hated and who hated Tanner.

But now remember the background of Tanner's life—the fur trade of the period. Raids and counter-raids, between the Nor'-Westers from Montreal, and the Hudson's Bay from London, had slipped from lawlessness to open massacre. The Nor'-Westers did not purpose permitting Lord Selkirk's Scotch settlers to sit right down at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red River, and run off this key gate their fine buffalo hunters. The plain rangers, or half-breed

JOHN TANNER

buffalo hunters, had slain and mutilated Governor Semple and all his men at Fort Douglas, and there held the strongest Hudson's Bay inland post. The Nor'-Westers were so all-powerful in the Eastern Canadian Courts, both Toronto and Montreal, that Lord Selkirk could get no redress for the Hudson's Bay Company; so he took the law into his own hands with vigour if not vengeance. He gathered up a band of discarded Swiss soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars, proceeded up the Great Lakes and captured the Nor'-Westers' strongest post—Fort William. There winter arrested farther advance westward; but before the Courts of Eastern Canada could stop him, Selkirk planned to strike his second unexpected blow and strike quick. He couldn't go forward from Fort William when ice barred all river craft; but he heard of a white guide who knew the Border Marsh Lands west of Lake Superior as a spider knows the threads of its own web. This white guide was a great hunter, and was usually followed by a wandering band belonging to no Indian tribe. His name was John Tanner.

Selkirk probably heard of him from Governor Cass, of Detroit, who had been asked

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

by letters from Kentucky and Ohio to find out about a boy captured years before by bands of wandering Shawnees.

Anyway, Tanner happened to be down Rainy River trading his pelts when the captain of the Swiss regiment from Fort William engaged him to lead fifty white soldiers and twenty Indian scouts in a short cut across what would be the base of a triangle. Instead of going north-west from Fort William to Lake Winnipeg, and then south from Lake Winnipeg to Red River, Selkirk's soldiers would cut across the Marsh Lands and come down on Fort Douglas from the south in midwinter, when no Nor'-Westers were on guard and all their half-breed followers scattered afar to the west hunting.

It was a very cold winter. Snowfall obscured sun, trail, all sense of direction. The Swiss didn't mind cold weather. They were used to that. They could bivouac under the stars, too. But these snowshoes, over branches that caught the rackets, so broad they nearly split a man trying not to step one on the other till he got the pace of sliding along one shoe in the track of the other—they set every leg muscle the Swiss knew aching in a fury. And the Indian

JOHN TANNER

scouts ahead never slackened, pacing off the reeling dizzy white miles. They kept the soldiers at a hard hobble to follow up and come into night camp dog-tired, ravenous for whatever the hunting scouts had steaming in the stew-pots.

Six weeks from Fort William saw the seventy men emerge at Henry's old North-West Fort at Pembina. It was only a clutter of empty huts. Sioux raids had driven all whites out. The Swiss had a good rest, a good sleep and got their lame spots limbered out. Tanner hurried ahead with a little band down the mid-ice of Red River, bidding the main band keep some distance behind, but to march with arms ready for instant action. He was pretty sure he would find that all the half-breed hunters had scattered far west. He probably also guessed, from what he had witnessed at many a scene, that he would find the little handful of traders left to guard Red River for the Nor'-Westers in the midst of the usual Christmas time revels—which meant on a prolonged spree. That the weather was terribly cold we may guess from the fact that not a soul noticed the single-file procession down the ice of Red

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

River northward. The march took four days with night camps.

Fort Douglas site you can see to-day just where Louise Street Bridge crosses Red River entering North Winnipeg. Tanner left his band of scouts two miles behind, and came to the rear of the pickets at dusk on a windy, stormy, dark night. He sent word for the Swiss to hasten as fast as their legs could carry them, silent as cats, bayonets uncased. Tanner had found out, though the big front gate was locked, that Fort Douglas was held by less than a dozen men, and the drifts were almost as high as the pickets. He had what looked like a lot of tepee poles ready; but they were not tepee poles. They were small trees, lopped off branches, to be used monkey-fashion getting over those pickets for the entire seventy men. Up they scrambled to the roof of the blacksmith shop—then a drop—and they were on the drifts inside the fort; and the butt end of a tree rammed the front door open. Even that had been unnecessary. The valiant Nor'-Westers rose from the floor to find fifty armed Swiss inside without firing a shot. The chief Nor'-Wester almost exploded with

JOHN TANNER

apoplexy, but "We threw him out in the snow to cool off," says Tanner.

Selkirk came in the spring, and rewarded Tanner with £20 a year for life; but Selkirk well knew how Tanner would now be exposed to the revenge of the two thousand half-breed hunters for siding with the Hudson's Bay Company. These ignorant fellows did not know that with Selkirk had come a commissioner from the East with a pretty broad hint that, unless the two great British Companies composed their quarrels and united, both would lose their charters and be compelled to go to court and stand trial for murder. Selkirk urged him to go back to his Kentucky home, and gave him letters to Astor's men at Mackinac, and to Governor Cass, at Detroit.

Tanner set off east by way of Rat Portage and Rainy River. He wanted to leave his little family supplies enough to keep them till he learned what he could of his own family's fate in Kentucky.

This slight delay nearly cost him his life. Tanner was now almost fifty. He was six feet tall, very erect, thin and gaunt, but very stern of expression from a life of hard knocks. He had seen enough of Indian life

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

to realize he did not belong to it. Bad as white man life was, at this period in the West, he knew now which race was his own. Somewhere down between Lake of the Woods and Rainy River, where he had joined his family, he felt the first rising tide of resentment toward himself. It was undoubtedly incited by the Medicine Man, who was daily more and more antagonizing Tanner's wife and mother-in-law toward the white man. Tanner was sitting inside his tepee, with his musket leaning against a tepee pole, when an Indian rushed in with the yell—"Here is where the wolves and carrion birds pick your bones;" and with a pounce he had Tanner down and throttled. Tanner jerked the fellow's knife from his belt, but he could not commit murder. However, the knife sent the ruffian scampering.

Later, back rushed the same fellow with a rabble and beat Tanner almost senseless. Tanner had the presence of mind to feign death. The band went off laughing. What cut Tanner to the quick was that his wife and her Cree mother had joined the Medicine Man's party. When Tanner recovered from this attack, the same hostile group tried again to rush his tent; but this time he was

JOHN TANNER

ready. With his musket pointed he bade them come in. "You have neither the heart of squaws nor the courage of coward dogs." And Tanner was a very sure shot.

It was useless to try to persuade his family to rejoin him. Old Woman seems to have faded from the picture, either becoming one of the old harpies, infesting every fort for discarded food and drinks, or dying of her own vices. At Mackinac, Astor's man gave Tanner a large, beautiful canoe, which could be lashed to the traders' schooners sailing for Detroit, and ride the waves lightly.

At Detroit Tanner could hardly credit his eyes. Here were no longer muddy flats, amid a huddle of French-Canadian cabins. Schooners, thick as gulls, rocked in the harbour. Back from the waterfront lay a white-washed fort, so peaceful in the summer sun that not a soldier paced the open gateway. Before Governor Cass' residence stood one soldier. Tanner heard a dozen mongrel tongues among the red men sauntering the streets. He saw a fellow who somehow gave the impression of Shawnee—the high pompadour hair, the long braids, the erect, powerful figure as distinguished from the frequent bow-legged, squat, canoe type.

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

"Where do you come from?" asked Tanner.

"Saginaw—I am Ottawa," lied the fellow.

"Ever know Kish-kau-ko?"

"He is my father."

"Where is Manitou-Geezik—his father?"

"Dead—last fall of leaves."

Tanner asked to be led to Kish-kau-ko; but the scoundrel would not see him. Kish-kau-ko was under arrest for frontier murders and out only on parole; but next day Tanner recognized his captor on the streets. He died imprisoned in Detroit.

Glimpsing Governor Cass in the vestibule of his house, Tanner pushed past the guard, and extended his letters from Lord Selkirk and Astor's men of Mackinac. Tanner believed all his family had been massacred, but Cass knew this was not so—that a younger brother, that baby John had pinched long ago, was even now on his way north from the Ohio to seek Tanner.

Kish-kau-ko was questioned and the Shawnee was now eager to wipe out record of crime. As to that cap, whereas he had boastfully reported having slain all the Tanner family, he now told the truth. The Shawnees had captured the elder brother,

JOHN TANNER

and, dragging him across the Ohio, had roped him to a tree for the night; but the brother had succeeded in gnawing off the wrist thongs. Getting out a penknife, he had cut the ropes and escaped at night. The cap displayed to the little boy was the only trophy of that raid.

Governor Cass sent Tanner on with money, provisions and a guide to the Ohio. In the woods, Tanner met a tall frontiersman with musket over shoulder and blanket in pack on back, striding toward Detroit. He never deigned to look at Tanner, whom he probably mistook for an Indian; for Tanner did not cut his braids till home, and never could completely discard moccasins. The frontiersman was Tanner's own younger brother, now going to meet him at Detroit. The home-coming was both very sad and very happy. Where had clustered a clutter of log cabins now stood stately square brick houses amid orchards and gardens. His sisters had married and had large families. One had ten children, and when the Sunday afternoon hymns rang out round the family organ, Tanner must have felt an alien to all the peace and joy and repose of a quiet Puritan Sabbath.

CANADIAN HISTORY READERS

Through the influence of General Clark, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, with which Tanner had been within walking distance when hunting between Souris and the Missouri, the poor fellow now received the appointment of interpreter for the fort at Mackinac and the mission; but the hardships of his early life, the beatings, the growing deafness, the blows his head had received in fights, left him insane at times.

Schoolcraft, the writer on Indian legends which inspired Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, had a very dissipated brother in military service at Mackinac. This Schoolcraft was shot by two drunken soldiers. In Tanner's insanity, he imagined he was blamed for the murder. He disappeared into the woods, and the missionary's daughter thought that he had either suicided or his canoe had been swamped in the rapids. His life is one of the saddest of all Indian annals. His face is that of a baffled man—tragic in its heart-break. Courage he never lacked, but gloom engulfed him in its dark billows.

4. STORIES OF HEROES

- *Malcolm Macleod—Lorne Pierce
- *Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville—Norman McLeod Rogers
- *Mascaron—V. P. Barry
- *Marquis de Montcalm—J. C. Sutherland
- *General James Wolfe—J. C. Sutherland
- *Sir Isaac Brock—T. G. Marquis
- *Brant—T. G. Marquis
- *Tecumseh—Lloyd Roberts
- *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police—C. F. Hamilton
- *Nova Scotia Privateers—A. MacMechan

5. STORIES OF HEROINES

- *Mère Marie de l'Incarnation—Bladen Davis
- *Madame La Tour—Nobel Skelton
- *Jeanne Mance—Katharine Hale
- *Marguerite Bourgeois—Frank Oliver Call
- *Madeleine de Verchères—E. T. Raymond
- *Barbara Heck—Blanche Hume
- *Mary Crowell—Archibald MacMechan
- *The Strickland Sisters—Blanche Hume
- *Laura Secord—Blanche Hume
- *Histories of St. Boniface—Emily P. Weaver

6. FATHERS OF THE DOMINION

- *Lord Dorchester—A. L. Burt
- *John Graves Simcoe—C. A. Gardner
- *Joseph Howe—D. C. Harvey
- *Sir John A. Macdonald—W. S. Wallace
- *Sir George E. Cartier—D. C. Harvey
- *George Brown—Chester Martin
- *Sir Leonard Tilley—T. G. Marquis
- *Thomas D'Arcy McGee—Isabel Skelton
- *Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt—J. I. Hutchinson
- *Sir Wilfrid Laurier—T. G. Marquis
- *Sir Charles Tupper—V. P. Barry

7. EMINENT CANADIANS

- Bishop John Strachan—W. S. Wallace
- *Dr. John McLoughlin—A. S. Marquis
- *Samuel Cunard—Archibald MacMechan
- *Judge Haliburton—Lorne Pierce
- *James Douglass—W. N. Scott
- *Egerton Ryerson—C. E. Sisson
- *Fathers of Reform—Selwyn Griffin
- *Lord Strathcona—H. A. Kennedy
- *Hon. Alexander Mackenzie—T. G. Marquis
- *Sir Sandford Fleming—Laurens J. Burpee

8. A BOOK OF BATTLES

- *Siege of Quebec. British Régions
- *Sieges of Port Royal—M. Maxwell MacOdrum
- *Sieges of Quebec: British Régions
- *Louisburg—Grace McLeod Rogers
- *Chignecto—Will R. Bird
- *Pontiac and the Siege of Detroit—T. G. Marquis
- *Naval Warfare on the Great Lakes—T. G. Marquis
- Battlefields of 1813—T. G. Marquis
- *Battlefields of 1814—T. G. Marquis
- *The North-West Rebellion—H. A. Kennedy
- Canadians in the Great War—M. Maxwell MacOdrum

9. COMRADES OF THE CROSS

- *Jean de Brébeuf—Isabel Skelton
- *Père Jogues—Isabel Skelton
- *Rev. James Evans—Lorne Pierce
- *Pioneer Missionaries in the Atlantic Provinces—Grace McLeod Rogers (84 pages, 20c)
- *Rev. John Black—Lorne Pierce
- *Père Lacombe—H. A. Kennedy
- *Rev. John McDougall—Lorne Pierce
- *Bishop Bompart—"Fancy Gaiters"
- *Father Morice—Thomas O'Hagan

10. STORIES OF INDUSTRY

- The Company of New France—Julia Jarvis
- *The Hudson's Bay Company—Robert Watson
- The North-West Company—A. S. Marquis
- The Story of Agriculture—Bladen Davis
- The Search for Minerals—J. Lewis Milligan
- *The Building of the C.P.R.—H. A. Kennedy
- Canadian Fisheries—V. P. Barry
- Canadian Forestry—Bladen Davis
- Shipbuilding, Railways, Canals—H. A. Kennedy
- The Story of Hydro—Bladen Davis

- *Objective Tests—Lorne J. Henry and Alfred Holmes (based on ten selected readers, to test reading ability)

Price 10c. a copy; Postage 2c. extra

(Except Pioneer Missionaries in the Atlantic Provinces—20 cents)

THE RYERSON PRESS

TORONTO 2



*Copyright, Canada, 1930, by
The Ryerson Press, Toronto*